

## **FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Mt. Haggin Wildlife Management Area Burnette Land Exchange

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Min

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### **Background**

Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposes a land exchange between Mt. Haggin WMA and the adjacent Burnette Ranch. A parcel of Burnette property, approximately 140 acres in size, is proposed to be exchanged for an adjacent parcel of FWP land equal in size. The Burnette parcel is composed mainly of bitterbrush with stands of Douglas fir and juniper in the draws. It is the only portion of the Burnette Ranch that contains bitterbrush. The FWP parcel is primarily basin wild rye with a stand of Douglas fir and aspen. Spotted knapweed exists on both parcels. The bitterbrush stand on the Burnette parcel is contiguous with a larger stand on the WMA. This area supports 40-70 mule deer throughout the year, especially in winter.

More than 20 years ago the boundary fence along this portion of the WMA was placed off-line for some long-forgotten reason. The result was that these 2 parcels were fenced out of the rightful ownership and subjected to different land uses depending on what side of the fence they were located. The bitterbrush community on the Burnette parcel has functioned as part of the WMA and has been protected from grazing impacts that have occurred on private land. Concurrently, the basin wild rye-dominated WMA parcel has been fenced in with private property and subjected to continuous livestock grazing. The Burnettes purchased this ranch property 2 years ago. Since the bitterbrush community has more value to wildlife than the basin wild rye community, it is desired to officially exchange these parcels in order to continue to protect this important habitat.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** There has been no public involvement to date. Upon Commission endorsement, FWP will conduct appropriate public review and analysis.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** Other than taking no action, there are no other feasible alternatives to this proposal.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** Because of the benefits to wildlife habitat that would occur with this land exchange, FWP recommends that the Commission endorse this project, providing FWP the opportunity to work on it further.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse the land exchange on Mt. Haggin WMA as proposed by FWP.